

## Interview H0201: with Könchok Samden [Tib. dkon mchog bsam gtan], (India, June, 1982) : Part No. 2 of 3

*Könchok Samden [Tib. dkon mchog bsam gtan] was an official of the Drigung Labrang in Tibet. In this interview, he discusses in detail about his personal relationship with Reting Rimpoche and the Taktra-Reting incident. He also talks about the life of farmers and nomads and their taxes, and about the Agriculture Office (Sonam Legung) and about the reforms made to change old loans. Then he talks about the Lhundrup dzong incident and his personal knowledge of Rebe Gyawu's life in exile in Hor Bachen.*

Q

What title did the Tritsab Rimpoche enjoy?

A

He enjoyed nothing because he was not appointed by the government.

Q

When the large national assembly [Tib. tshogs 'du rgyas 'dzoms] of the Tibetan Government was held, did [Drigung](#) have to participate in that?

A

No, we didn't have to.

Q

When decisions were made by the national assembly, would they announce it to the different areas?

A

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It will be informed by the respective [dzong](#). The areas of the [Drigung Labrang](#) that fall under Metrogongkar Dzong would be informed by that [dzong](#).

Q

For instance, when the 13th Dalai Lama died, the government sent the information through all the dzongs. Since [Drigung](#) had two or three [dzong](#) it was connected with, did you get three different messages informing you about the same thing from the three different [dzong](#)?

A

No. As far as [Drigung Labrang](#) was concerned, we were situated in the area covered by Metrogongkar Dzong, so we got our information from it. However some of our [treba](#) were located in Lungshö [Tib. klung shod] which was under Phöndo Dzong so they were informed by Phöndo Dzong directly through their [gembo](#). They didn't send it to [Drigung Labrang](#) at all; they informed our [gembo](#) there, and the [gembo](#) informed the others. Similarly, our [labrang](#) had some pasture land in Nagshö, but we didn't need to deal with [Nagchu](#) Dzong unless there was some case about the land. In such cases, they would inform [Drigung Labrang](#) and [Drigung Labrang](#) had to go and show their respective land tenure documents, etc. For instance, in the Lharigo area there were three different groups who belonged to [Drigung](#). One group in the southern area fell under Lharigo Dzong. When the Lharigo Dzong told something to the group, it would report to the [labrang](#), saying, "The government orders have come, how should we serve them." They may have discussed this internally in [Drigung Labrang](#), but the Lharigo Dzong did not tell anything to the [Drigung Labrang](#) at all. Similarly, all other dzongs, whatever they have to say or to inform etc., they did that in their own respective areas that were under their control. Those areas would come and consult with [Drigung Labrang](#) asking what the best way to implement it was. The [dzong](#) would not directly inform [Drigung Labrang](#).

Q

How did you become a [gembo](#)? Was it a case of the father who was succeeded by his son or was he appointed by the Labrang concerned, or was he elected or selected? And how was the administration set up in the villages and how did that function?

A

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It was not the case that the son would succeed his father. Take the example of Metrogongkar. For Metrogongkar Dzong and for [Drigung](#), whatever we had to do as service to the government, we had two persons to go and see at Metrogongkar Dzong. They were called nanggyaba [Tib. nang rgyab pa].

Q

Who appointed these two nanggyaba?

A

They were appointed by [Drigung Labrang](#).

Q

How did [Drigung Labrang](#) select these two people?

A

Normally, the [miser](#) of [Drigung](#) would hold a meeting and these two nanggyapa were selected among the [Drigung](#) miser who had some kind of better knowledge, who knew writing, reading, who could understand and express themselves and also had quite good appearance. In this way they were selected and we finalized it and appointed them.

Q

When you say that those people were appointed by the [Drigung Labrang](#), then was it decided by the [Drigung](#) Chandzö or was it necessary to go up to the [Drigung](#) Kyamgön and have him approve it?

A

It was not necessary to go up to the [Drigung](#) Kyamgön, the [chandzö](#) would decide. We had two of these nanggyaba who took full responsibility for the whole [gyatso](#). Gyatso here means the entire people -- all of the people of [Drigung](#) who fell under Metrogongkar Dzong. Similarly, for the Phöndo area, we had one nanggyaba who was appointed in the same way and dealt with Phöndo Dzong. The man who went to Phöndo Dzong was not called a nanggyaba. He was one of the better [gembo](#). The position of nanggyapa was slightly higher than a [gembo](#), so we didn't have a nanggyapa for Phöndo Dzong, but we had one better [gembo](#) who dealt with that. Under these nanggyaba, each particular area

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like Thil, [Tse](#), and Lungshö had one [gembo](#). Each one of these areas or tax units would select their own [gembo](#) and they would inform the [Drigung Labrang](#) that, "This is our [gembo](#). " Then the [labrang](#) would say, "Okay." This is how the [gembo](#) were appointed.

Q

The duty of the nanggyaba was to deal with the government taxes, right?

A

The nanggyaba would report to the [labrang](#) whatever government orders came and how much corvée horse and people we needed to send and how much taxes we had to pay in-kind. Then they would divide this among the [gembo](#) of the particular areas.

Q

When some government officials came, who would cover the expenditures?

A

Normally when officials traveled from Metrogongkar to Kongpo, there were people waiting on monthly turns at the transport stations like at [Drigung](#), Gyamo and Metrogongkar to provide the corvée horses and accommodations. When they had to send a large number of corvée horses and so on, all the [miser](#) would gather to work for it.

Q

Actually, these expenditures were provided by the [miser](#), right?

A

Yes. They were provided by the entire [miser](#) of the area. This was called the dukhong [Tib. 'du khongs]

Q

The [miser](#) had a basis [Tib. rten] in land for providing these taxes. Otherwise, they didn't get anything from the government, right?

A

Yes.

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Q

They just had their tax land as the basis for providing the taxes, right?

A

Yes. When the officials came with their travel document issued by the Kashag [that gave them the right to demand transport animals, etc.], the [miser](#) had to send the corvée horses although there was a small horse fee. When they didn't have enough horses and pack animals, they had to hire horses from other people and provide the transportation fee. [These were for the government and were called outer taxes [Tib. [chitre](#)].

Q

What if a guest of the [labrang](#) came?

A

Then the [labrang](#) would provide the expenditures for them. As for the internal taxes [Tib. nang khral] that were provided to the [labrang](#). There were separate people working and sending corvée horses for the [labrang](#). The [treba](#) would have to work for the [outer tax](#) for the government and work for the internal taxes for the [labrang](#).

Q

Did they have a separate land tax basis for working for the internal taxes?

A

Yes.

Q

Did those people have land given to them by [Drigung Labrang](#) as the basis for them to meet their [inner tax](#) obligations [nangtre](#)) ?

A

Yes, they did. Among themselves they would say, "I have one third of a [nangtre](#) and two thirds of [chitre](#)." [in tax-base land]

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Q

The taxes were levied according to the number of [gang](#) they had, right?

A

Yes. Even the nomads in the north were the same.

Q

Were these taxes in-kind and labor very heavy?

A

Sometimes they were heavy. Suppose the Governor General of Eastern Tibet traveled up and down or the Kongji [Tib. kong spyi] or the [Horji](#) went up and down, then they were fantastically heavy. Then sometimes for months we would have hardly one or two people going up and down, then there was nothing. It varied. Normally, it was not bad because there was not much traveling of those high officials such as the Doji, Kongji and [Horji](#). The everyday thing, the regular thing, was not that heavy because sometimes there were very few travelers.

Q

Did you have any other taxes besides sending corvée animals and people? Did you have any other taxes in-kind?

A

Yes, we did. It was what we called the "taxes in-kind and labor" [Tib. [gangdro langdön](#)] , where we also sometimes had to pay taxes in grain.

Q

Did the people who sent corvée horses also have to pay grain taxes?

A

Yes, they did. But it depended on the size of the tax land [Tib. [treden](#)] they had as the basis for providing the tax. If they had a larger area of land they had to send the corvée horses. When they had more than that, they had to pay grain taxes also. And there were

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also [magang](#) where they had to send one soldier from each 4 [dön](#) [called [shina](#)] and one soldier from each six [dön](#) (called drugna [Tib. drug sna]) and one soldier from each eight [dön](#) (called gyena [Tib. brgyad sna]).

Q

How did you measure a [dön](#)?

A

This was a tax unit. It was like 6 [phül](#) was equal to one [dre](#) and 20 [dre](#) was equal to one [khe](#). And some of them would say I had to pay the tax for 1 [phül](#) and some of them would say I had to pay the tax for 1 [khe](#) that is like 1 [gang](#). It seems that there were different ways of counting [gang](#) in different areas. Normally, the government recruited soldiers, as I mentioned above, according to the number of [dön](#).

Q

How many [khe](#) were there in one [dön](#)?

Q

I am not sure about that.

Q

How did it come to be that certain people with four [dön](#) had to send one soldier and in another area for eight [dön](#) you had to send one soldier. How did that difference come about?

A

It depended on the demands of the government. Sometimes the government would say that each 4 don should produce one soldier and sometimes they said, each six [dön](#), sometimes each eight [dön](#) should produce one soldier. Suppose two families had four [dön](#) and the government demands one soldier, then the two families would produce one soldier jointly. Similarly, if one family had six [dön](#) and the government demanded 1 soldier from each 6 [dön](#), they each would send one soldier. If six families had six [dön](#), they had to jointly send one soldier.

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Q

Suppose there were two families who together had 8 [dön](#) and they had to produce one soldier, how did that work because one man would have to go but there were two families involved?

A

It didn't matter. One of the families could send one person and the other would then meet the expenses, etc. It didn't matter. One would go and both would meet the expenses for clothes, salary, etc. Whatever they had to give, it would be shared by the two families. And even if both families didn't have anyone to send from their own families, they could hire somebody else from outside and pay them. Whatever the situation might be, it didn't matter.

Q

What other taxes did one have to pay?

A

There was another one that was the land basis for working or paying the taxes. In between the [treden](#) land, at the right or the left or in the front or at the back side, there was some barren, empty land. This land belonged to [Drigung Labrang](#). However, if someone wanted to open that land and grow a crop, [Drigung Labrang](#) was the owner of the land but the cultivated field belonged to the Agriculture Office (Tib. Sonam Legung [so nam las khungs]) of the government. So first they would come to [Drigung Labrang](#) and would say, "In between the [treden](#) land, there is a certain area of barren land so may I be given permission to open that land to grow a crop." The [Drigung Labrang](#) would give that permission and the man would go and cultivate the land. When they got a crop, for the first two years there was no tax or lease fee at all. From the 3rd year on, they had to pay the "one tenth lease" [Tib. bcu zur bogs ma] fee to the Agriculture Office. It depended on the quality of the fields, e.g., whether it was best, middle or worst. Or in other words, whether it was irrigable fields (called chushing [Tib. [chu](#) zhing]) or a field on the plains (Tib. shungshing [gzhung zhing]) or a field in the mountains (Tib. rishing [ri zhing]). If it was the best chushing, then the yield would be counted as 8 times, and the middle quality land



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would be like 5 times and worst would be 3 times. That sort of lease you had to pay to the Agriculture Office.

Q

Chushing means land that can be irrigated, right?

A

Yes.

Q

Shungshing means fields on the plains that didn't have irrigation and the rishing was the worse, right?

A

Yes. For the shungshing, you had to depend on rainfall. The rishing was the worse because the crop won't grow well and it would also be damaged by rabbits. The normal system was for the middle quality land to be counted as a yield of 6 or 5 times [the seed sown] and the worse would be 3 times (the seed sown).

Q

The best would be 10 times?

A

No, there was no ten times. Out of that, one tenth would be collected by Agriculture Office directly, with [Drigung Labrang](#) not being involved. Also some of the people living around also belonged to the Sonam Legung so it would also collect the [mibo](#) fee from them.

Q

How is it possible that people who were living under [Drigung](#)'s jurisdiction had come to belong to the Agricultural Office? They were not [Drigung](#)'s [miser](#) at all. Is that right?

A

Drigung Labrang's [miser](#) referred to those who had settled on [Drigung](#)'s land. Those were considered to be [Drigung Labrang](#)'s [miser](#). Thereafter, the people who came from

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other places such as from Kham, [Amdo](#) or from Central Tibet and who didn't have a specific [lord](#), in other words, who were people just roaming around, they all belonged to the Agriculture Office so it collected the [mibo](#) from them. For instance the Muslims in Lhasa. If you looked at them, they looked like foreigners but they still had to pay their [mibo](#) fee to the Agriculture Office.

Q

Did the Nepalese also have to pay the [mibo](#) fee?

A

I don't know about the Nepalese, but the Muslims had to pay the [mibo](#) to the Agriculture Office. They were living in the area called Wabaling [Ch. he ba liang], and they were sort of a semi-Chinese type of people. They also had to pay their [mibo](#) to the Agriculture Office and they also had a [gembo](#) who was appointed by the Agriculture Office itself.

Q

Did the Agriculture Office have jurisdiction in Kham areas like Balithang, Traya [Tib. brag g [yab](#)] , [Gyerong](#) and Nyarong?

A

No, they didn't have that. Those places had become their own lands and the Agriculture Office didn't have any jurisdiction down there at all. But when people from there didn't stay in their own places and came to Lhasa, then they belonged to the Agriculture Office.

Q

Suppose one man comes from Kham, settles in [Drigung](#) and asks for land and gets it from [Drigung Labrang](#). Would this land also belong to the Agriculture Office?

A

No, only the people belonged to the Agriculture Office, not the land. The land belonged to [Drigung Labrang](#), but they had to pay the one tenth lease fee to the Agriculture Office and they had to pay "One twentieth to the Landowner" [Tib. sa bdag nyi shu zur] [to [Drigung](#)] . On top of that, the person had to pay [mibo](#) to the Agriculture Office.

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Q

What is [mibo](#)?

A

There were two kinds of [mibo](#) in the Agriculture Office. Some people had to pay in [trangga garpo](#) and some could just pay in paper currency. Certain people has been asked to pay only in [trangga garpo](#) because these [trangga garpo](#) were pure silver coins and were stored in the government's treasury [Tib. bkar 'jug]. Some of them had to pay cash at the current rate of a [trangga garpo](#), like several [sang](#) for one [trangga garpo](#). I was not a member of the Agriculture Office, but my teacher Urgyenla [Tib. o rgyan lags] was a clerk there, so he used to take me as his servant to the office. There I had to copy the writing that he had to do, for example a list with names of people. I worked one year like that in the Agriculture Office.

Q

Did the Agriculture Office maintain a list with the names of the people and to whom they belonged to?

A

Yes, they did. Not only the Agriculture Office, but everyone did. Even [Drigung Labrang](#) had a list of the names of people, whether or not the person was a [treba](#) or whether he was paying the [mibo](#) or whatever. They had separate lists which maintained the registration of all the people that we had [owned]. Some people were paying [mibo](#), others were [treba](#). If you were a [treba](#), you didn't have to pay [mibo](#).

Q

What would happen when a child was born?

A

If a child was born, they immediately had to report it to the Agriculture Office saying, "So and so father and mother had a son or daughter born in such and such an animal year." In this way, they had to inform them. Similarly when people were going to get married or were going as magpa or bride, they also had to inform the Agriculture Office. They would

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say, "I am going to send this person as a magpa, may I send him?" They will not say, "No," but they will transfer the names from the registration of one [lord](#) to the other.

Q

Suppose a bride didn't get along well and returned to her family, what would happen?

A

If they returned to their families then again they had to inform the respective offices of the serf owners [Tib. mi bdag].

Q

Suppose a bride returned to her home, since she had already been sent out, what kind of rights would she have within her family?

A

That entirely depended on the individual family and how much love they had between the brothers and sister. If the family members didn't have strong attachments and if they said that we can't do anything for you because you were already sent out and we have given you a share, the bride would have nothing to say. Some of them, however, were very kind and loving to their relations, so they would give them full rights. 'Full rights' in the sense that they can live in the family and can do whatever they liked to do. They had full rights and they would say, "When the daughter returns home there is no need to check whether it is a good day or a bad day." [Tib. bu mo rang yul la log par/ gza' dang skar ma rtsi dgos med.] There is one more thing about the taxes of the Agriculture Office. They had a rule that every three years they can leave the land fallow in order to get a better crop next time and only have to pay taxes for the two years they planted it ([Tib. dbyar skyur gsum gcig chag]).

Q

Were all the lease fees that were collected by the Agriculture Office one tenth?

A

Yes, it was always 10% or one tenth.

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Q

Whether the field was on the plains or on the mountain, it was always 10%?

A

Yes, it was always 10%, whether it was good, bad or medium soil and whether it was irrigable or not. That had been done from the beginning/ It was collected according to 3 times, 4 times, or 6 times, etc. [the stipulated yield based on the amount of seed sown on the fields].

Q

What would happen if one year there was not a good crop? Say there was a famine or the crop was destroyed by hail etc. What would happen?

A

It didn't matter whether the crop was destroyed or if you didn't get even a single grain from the land. You still had to pay the 10%. If you got many times the seed sown in yield, like 10, 20 or 30 times, then you would still only pay 10%. It was always 10%. There was no discussion about that.

Q

Suppose there would be a flood and the fields were washed away. Then what would happen?

A

If a big disaster such as this happened, then you had to inform the government and the government would do an investigation like the one in the Iron-Tiger Land Investigation [Tib. lcags stag zhib gzhung] or the Water-Tiger Land Investigation [Tib. [qu](#) stag zhib gzhung]. They would investigate the matter. For example, a [treba](#) faced many misfortunes such as the father died, the son died and even the grandson died and the family was about to become extinct. Then there were also cases in which people didn't die, they were still living, but very unfortunate things happened, so they could not pay or work for the (corvee) taxes. What would happen is that they started selling the land. Actually the land was owned by somebody else and the irrigation was owned by somebody else so they had

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no right to sell it from generation to generations. However, they could sell it to others until they were able to pay or work for the taxes [Tib. khral nam [tsho](#)]. In other words, he was selling the land so long as this generation was alive. They would sell it at whatever rate they could get at that point. That land was bought by the richer ones like aristocrats or religious estates, and they took loans from them and left the land like a pawn.

Q

Did the people who bought it pay the taxes?

A

No, no. The one who sold the land had to pay the tax. They sold it for whatever kind of price they could get. The land was bought by a religious estate or an aristocrat and the land seller would borrow grain from the well-to-do during springtime when they sowed the seed. Then they would ask for 25% interest (Tib. shila ngadro [bzhi la Inga 'gro]) or 20% (Tib. ngala drugdu [Inga la drug 'gro]). They took those loans in order to grow their fields. They sort of put (some of) their land up so that in autumn they could pick up the interest. Then the family who took loan became poorer and poorer and they became unable to pay the interest, leave alone the principal. That went on year after year, and finally the land would belong to the aristocrat or religious estate and the land selling family had to pay and work for the taxes. As a result, the [treba](#) family would go extinct.

Q

What they could do was to run away, right?

A

Yes, like running away. Anyway, they could no longer stay in that place. When it became almost unbearable, they would send a petition to the government asking for an investigation. Such a petition cannot be filed, in the sense that no one will pay attention when it is filed by a small village unless it [the petition] is done altogether by the subjects under one [dzong](#). Then the government will yield to it or will pay attention.

Q

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They sold this particular land for a little bit of grain that they had borrowed from the religious estates and the aristocrats, and finally they had to flee. So what happened with the tax (obligation)?

A

Supposing in that village there were 7 households and one household got extinct. The tax would be levied on the [other] 6 households.

Q

Even though they didn't have the land, they had to pay the taxes, right?

A

Yes. After that when another household would become extinct, the remaining 5 households had to work for the taxes. Likewise, when they kept on doing that, finally all of the households would get extinct and they would not have any choice but to report to the government and the government had to do an investigation. Then the government [made new rules regarding loans that] fully exempted the principal and interest of loans that had been made many years ago. And for loans that had been taken for several years, they were exempted from paying the interest and only had to pay the principal. And for loans taken a few years before those, they were exempted from paying the interest and the principal should be paid according to a schedule of payments. Then the land was returned to the owner. When they got their land back, some households who had lost their land at the time of their parent's period or grandparents or great grandparents, didn't even know and hadn't even heard that this land belonged to them. Such things I have seen happening.

Q

Were they able to get their land back?

A

Yes, they were able to get their land back. They took it back from the religious estates and aristocrat's estates.

Q

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But how did those monastic estates and aristocrats give them back?

A

Naturally, the land was given according to the record books where the lands were listed [Tib. sa [tho](#) lag deb], so they could not argue.

Q

When the land was returned to the owner, did they have to give compensation the buyer of the land? I mean for example, if the land was bought by a monastic estate, they wouldn't return it right away, right?

A

They had no choice but to return it because it was not owned by them from the beginning and it was not given to them by the government properly with registered title. This particular land is what they had sort of manipulated in a certain way and had been keeping it, but they didn't own it. So they really had no right to argue and they had to return it, and they did.

Q

But within the aristocratic and religious estate owners, didn't they try their best to manipulate or to go to the officials and try to bribe them to avoid returning the land?

A

They couldn't do this because this was the period when the government made a decision and once the order was given it had to be implemented, so they couldn't do anything and they didn't.

Q

When did the Agricultural Office start?

A

I don't think many years had passed since it started. When I was a small kid, at that time, the Agricultural Office was there. It might have been established during the 13th Dalai Lama's time. Normally we talked about the "Agricultural Office" but in the documents it was



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written "Misö Legung [Tib. mi so'i las khungs]" which means the office in charge of [miser](#) and agriculture. Probably, I am not sure; it was established by the 13th Dalai Lama.

Q

Who were the heads of the Agricultural Office? Were there both lay and monk officials?

A

Probably it was headed by two fourth rank officials, a [khenjung](#) and a [rimshi](#).

Q

Who do you remember who did it when you went there to write something for your teacher?

A

Take the following example. Just before the trouble in 1959, I remember that the ones in charge were Rimshi Ringang [Tib. rin sgang] and Tsagserkang [Tib. rtsag ser khang] who was also called Chapa Sey [Tib. cha pa sras]. As far as the [khenjung](#) was concerned, the younger Tsadora [Tib. tsha rdor ba] Khenjung was there. And there was also a fifth rank [Tib. [letsenpa](#)] named Lobsang Norbu [Tib. blo bzang nor bu]. There were three clerks, one of which was my teacher, Gyenda Urgyenla, who was the senior clerk. Then there were also a [gembo](#). From Lhasa there were one or two [gembo](#) and there were two [nyerpa](#). Then there was one [gembo](#) called Chömpel [Tib. chos 'phel] who was sometimes called [nyerpa](#) and sometimes called [gembo](#). One of the [gembo](#) was from the Wapaling [Ch. he ba liang] Muslims.

Q

Didn't you have nanggyaba in the Agricultural Office?

A

No, no, no. The nanggyaba were only in [Drigung](#). That was our internal term in [Drigung](#). In Lhasa, as far as the Agricultural Office was concerned, they only used the terms [gembo](#) and [nyerpa](#). The Agricultural Office, unlike other offices, had quite tight discipline. For example, my father came from Eastern Tibet, the Kham area, but had remained in Central Tibet. He belonged to Agriculture Office. Later, since we belonged to [Drigung](#) through

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our religious lineage, the [Drigung Labrang](#) asked for both of us to get exchanged from the Agriculture Office to [Drigung Labrang](#). When [Drigung Labrang](#) asked for the person-exchange (Tib. *mije* [mi brjes]), it was quite difficult because the proposal had to be approved [Tib. 'char phul phyag rtags dgongs don] by the higher authorities.

Q

When you say the approval was obtained from the higher authorities, do you mean it had to be approved by the Kashag or the Dalai Lama?

A

Yes. It had to go to the highest level, up to the Regent. The approval of the Kashag was not enough to have a person-exchange from the Agriculture Office to another aristocrat or religious estate. It was very tight.

Q

If I remember correctly, you said that the Agriculture Office had no jurisdiction in places far away like the Kham area.

A

The Agriculture Office was operational only in the [Ütsang](#) region.

Q

What would happen to the extra land, or the land irrigated in those areas down there (in Kham)?

A

In Kham, it fell under the jurisdiction of the Doji. Likewise, in the southern region it was under the Lhoji and in the northern region it was under the [Horji](#), etc. As far as the people were concerned, the people who ran away from the Kham area and were sort of living around in Lhasa and in the [Ütsang](#) area were much more [in numbers]. Therefore the Agriculture Office necessarily arose in the [Ütsang](#) area. In the Agriculture Office, we had all these different people who came from different places. Take for example, the better people. We had very great people also under Agriculture Office's jurisdiction. Also, the

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bad people, all these people who were living by stealing and all the different wandering beggars [Tib. phyogs sprang] all belonged to the Agriculture Office.

Q

Did all the wandering beggars have to pay the [mibo](#) to the Agriculture Office?

A

Yes, they had to pay the [mibo](#).

Q

If they didn't have money, what would happen?

A

That was no excuse. They had to pay. And the [mibo](#) was also not that heavy that one could not pay.

Q

How much [mibo](#) did you have to pay?

A

The [mibo](#) was very little. Sometimes 1 [sang](#), sometimes 1 [sho](#), sometimes one [trangga](#), it varied.

Q

This was for a year, right?

A

Yes. So it was not that heavy. Among them some people had to pay real [trangga garpo](#), sometimes they had to pay paper money. From those who had to pay [trangga garpo](#) (silver coins), some of them had to pay the current rate of the [trangga garpo](#) in cash instead of paying the real [trangga garpo](#).

Q

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When they had to pay silver coins, would one [trangga garpo](#) be counted as one [trangga](#) or one [trangga garpo](#) be counted at the current rate of four [sang](#). Originally it was one [trangga](#).

A

In the early times, one [trangga garpo](#) was equal to one [trangga](#), but later the rate was 4 [sang](#). So it was counted according to the later value. With the value of one [trangga](#) garbo being four [sang](#), when they had to pay one [trangga](#) it meant that they had to pay four [sang](#). In the Agriculture Office, some of them had to pay real [trangga garpo](#) and some of them have to pay ordinary currency. The people who had to pay the real [trangga garpo](#), had to go to exchange it with ordinary currency. For example, let's say someone had to pay one [sang](#) in [trangga](#) garbo, that meant that he had to pay six and a half [trangga garpo](#). That follows the original, traditional way of counting the [trangga](#) garbo as one [trangga](#). Though you were paying actually four sangs as far as the value was concerned, it counted as only one [trangga](#).

Q

When I was a child and my father gave me some pocket money or a gift to buy something, he would say, "You have a [trangga garpo](#) ngüsang nga [Tib. Inga]. That meant 5 sangs per [trangga garpo](#). I could go down to the treasury, the [chandzö](#) khang [Tib. phyag mdzod khang] and collect one [trangga garpo](#), counted as one [trangga](#) and then collect the whole amount, that's how it was counted, right?

A

Yes, yes, this was exactly how they counted. Then the Agriculture Office also had to produce those "ollos" for the Mönlam and [Tsongjö](#). Ollos were the persons who took the tea and porridge to serve the monks during the Mönlam and [Tsongjö](#) festivals. There used to be a lot of those ollos. Each man was handed a tea pot. The tea pots that they carried inside the courtyard of the [Jokhang](#) were silver pots; those carried outside were copper pots. They were huge. They had to hand those pots to the ollos. These ollos have to be sent by the Agriculture Office. That was the tax which the Agriculture Office had to do.

Q

Wasn't the [Laja](#) Treasury responsible for the Mönlam activities?

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A

As far as the material supply were concerned, the [Laja](#) was responsible. But just like in India where we have these coolies to carry the goods, similarly, the coolie-type of person, ollos, had to be produced by the Agriculture Office.

Q

Since all people were paying [mibo](#), from where did the Agriculture Office get people to do the ollo work?

A

The [gembo](#) and [nyerpa](#) had to hire those people from Lhasa, mostly from the wandering beggars. But then they also had to be very careful as they were handling silver pots so if they ran away with them, the Agriculture Office has to replace the silver pots. So they had to be very careful.

Q

Talking about Mönlam, you just mentioned that they had very good [shag](#) (layer of coagulated butter fat)[Tib. zhag] on the surface of the tea that was served to the monks.

A

They [the monks] had very good [shag](#) on their tea and [sometimes] sold it to villagers. There were two categories. One was a good category. I don't know how they [the villagers] knew the difference, but they did. The good category of [shag](#) they bought was used for making tea. The ordinary quality was used for tanning leather.

Q

Earlier, you told how soldiers were recruited, so we know that. But who paid their expenses, the government or the individuals?

A

Of course the government should have had to pay something, but I really don't know. Each regiment also had to give something to the soldiers.

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Q

Coming back to the main point, in the year of the [Khyungram](#) incident, Reting resigned. Where were you when Reting resigned and did you hear that Reting was going to resign, etc.? If so, how?

A

I vaguely remember hearing that he was going to resign. When he actually resigned I think I was somewhere in the Northern Tibet. I really don't exactly remember.

Q

When people heard that Reting was going to resign did people show extreme sadness?

A

It was kind of generic, there wasn't anything special.

Q

When you came back from Northern Tibet, did you come through Reting?

A

No, I didn't. A few years after Reting's resignation, when my father passed away, I went to Reting to do his rites. But I didn't go to see Reting after his resignation.

Q

What about the English school that was set up in Tibet?

A

I don't know anything about that.

Q

They set up an English school and they set up a football team. At that time the monasteries objected saying that they were kicking the Buddha's head, etc. Don't you remember such things?

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A

I remember vaguely that learning a foreign language was objected to by the monasteries. They thought that if learning foreign languages developed it may harm the development of Buddhism. Under those circumstances they might have acted. I vaguely remember hearing such a thing, but I don't know exactly. I don't know the details, etc.

Q

Do you remember how [Taktra](#) took over?

A

I remember hearing that Reting was going to resign and [Taktra](#) was going to take over. As far as [Taktra](#) was concerned, he was not quite qualified to be the Regent since according to traditional rules, the Regent comes only to the Gyetrü Huthokthu [Tib. hu thog thu], or sometimes maybe a [Ganden Tripa](#) [Tib. dga' ldan khri pa] [lamas of higher status]. Otherwise, it goes mostly to the Gyetrü Huthokthu. [Taktra](#) was not in that sort of lineage so in that way he was not qualified to be the Regent. However, Reting Rimpoche used his power and directly appointed him. Since Reting and [Taktra](#) had a relationship of receiving teachings, he used his personal power to let [Taktra](#) obtain his regency. He not only appointed [Taktra](#) as the Regent, but also did it on his own. Using his power as ruler, he appointed him. As far as the Tsondu was concerned, they gave Reting Rimpoche only three years leave. After this leave of three years he had to rejoin the government. Therefore Reting Rimpoche himself decided to ask [Taktra](#) to be the Regent for three years. That is what I heard.

Q

What did you experience or what do you remember after you heard that [Taktra](#) had taken over? Were people really saying that now prices have gone up, etc. Do you remember anything about that?

A

I don't remember exactly. People were saying a lot of different things. However people were saying that during the Reting's regency the situation was meritorious [Tib. skal pa bzang po] and during [Taktra](#)'s term it became deteriorated.

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Q

Don't you remember that at that time people were saying that the price of tea was going up, butter was going up, wheat was going up, barley was going up and people were complaining?

A

I do remember commodities prices sort of shooting up and people were saying, "It used to be very great during Reting's time but now it is not so good." That sort of talk was common. I also remember people saying, "Today the price of the butter has gone up, the price of barley has gone up, the price of rice has gone up and I don't know why because during the Reting period it was very good." That kind of talk was common and those sort of things were going on.

Q

I heard that [Taktra](#) took over in the Iron-Snake year [Tib. lcags sbrul]. Since then, I heard that [Taktra](#) gradually changed the people in the key posts who had been appointed by Reting Rimpoche personally like the Kashag, the tsipön, the [drunyichemmo](#). He gradually changed them. Do you remember anything about this or do you have any comment?

A

If you look at it from the outside, you can understand.

Q

Not looking from the outside. What do you think about it?

A

When you look at it, normally those who were close to Reting were a sort of gradually fading away, which was true.

Q

Can you give me an example?

A



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I have no specific incident or example to say here, but when you look at it, it happened.

Q

Do you mean the shape?

A

Not only the shape, but those who were close to Reting could not raise their heads. They were sort of gradually going down, down, down. That was the impression.

Q

The next year, the Water-Horse Year, was the year in which the Dalai Lama took vows and became a monk (Tib. rabse [rab bzhes]). Where were you at that time?

A

I think I was in Northern Tibet.

Q

That was the same year that two Americans came to Tibet. I think it was about 1943. It was the time that the World War was starting. Do you remember anything?

A

No, I don't remember anything.

Q

Do you remember anything of World War II at all? Did you ever hear people talking about the Second World War?

A

No, I didn't because we were really not that interested. We didn't know much about it. We really didn't know anything about it. Very vaguely we heard that there was a war, otherwise we didn't hear anything.

Q

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Didn't you feel that the prices were shooting up and that accommodations were not available because of the war, etc.?

A

Prices were going up, no doubt, but we didn't know why the prices were going up. Nobody bothered. The prices kept on going up and up, year by year, and finally the Chinese came. When the Chinese came, they [the prices] shot up completely all of a sudden.

Q

How was it that you didn't know that World War II was going on since you, as a businessman, came often to India?

A

I only came to India once to do wool trade.

Q

That was in the Iron-Dragon Year, 1940, right?

A

Yes. As I mentioned earlier, we didn't know who and who were fighting during World War II.

Q

What business did you do? What did you take from India to Tibet? What did you take?

A

We took cotton cloth and balls of (compressed) tea.

Q

You remember that there was trouble created by Kong Quzhang who was the Guomindang representative staying in Lhasa. One Chinese came and knocked on the door of [Norbulinga](#) at night and requested [help] to save his life, etc. Do you remember anything about this?

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A

No, I don't. I have nothing to say about it.

Q

Do you remember that at that time there were a lot of Chinese around who didn't get along well among themselves? They were fighting and started killing each other, etc.

A

No, I don't remember that. I have nothing to say.

Q

Do you remember that in the Wood-Monkey Year (1944) Reting Rimpoche returned once again to Lhasa?

A

Yes. It is true that Reting Rimpoche returned and I heard about it, but I was not in Lhasa at that time. I do remember hearing things like, "This year Reting Rimpoche visited Lhasa and it was very great."

Q

Did Reting Rimpoche stay in Reting all the time after his resignation as Regent?

A

Yes, that is true. He stayed in Reting all the time. He came [to Lhasa] only once.

Q

Actually, it had been three years since he resigned on the 14th of the 1st month in the Iron-Dragon Year (1940). In that year, [Taktra](#) took power. Since Reting resigned and [Taktra](#) took over on the 1st day of the 1st month of the Iron-Snake Year. In the Water-Horse year and Water-Sheep Year, Reting stayed in Reting. In the Wood-Monkey Year, he came to Lhasa when three year period was over. It was the fourth year. At that time, it was said that Reting came to take back the regency. Before Reting Rimpoche came

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to Lhasa for the second time, I mean coming back after his resignation, were there any contradictions between the two Regents?

A

There may not be many such things, but as I mentioned earlier to you, there was a feeling that anyone who had something to do with Reting or was close to Reting was gradually losing. That was the point concerning Reting Labrang.

Q

Did Reting Rimpoche stay in retreat during those three years? He didn't, did he?

A

Of course he stayed in retreat. He stayed, but he might not have stayed for such a long time, for three years. But he definitely stayed in retreat. I don't know what retreat, how long, etc., but he definitely stayed in retreat.

Q

Didn't you go and visit Reting?

A

I didn't visit him. As I mentioned above, I went there after my father died. That was when Reting was the ex-Regent.

Q

In that year, Geshe Sherab Gyatso [Tib. dge bshes shes rab rgya mtsho] returned from China to Tibet. He came up to [Nagchu](#). Do you remember anything about that, what happened?

Q

I don't have anything to tell you.

Q

Another thing happened. In 1945 when an American airplane crashed in the Samye area. Do you remember anything about that? Where were you then?

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A

Probably I was in Lhasa. I heard that a plane had crashed and that there were four or five people. I was in Lhasa and everybody was going to watch. Different people were coming, so everybody was looking. I also went up to Thepungkang [Tib. thal phung sgang] to watch and I saw them coming. I went and saw those people coming. They were big people having some kind of big lump tied around their necks. People started talking: "That must have something to do with their jumping from the plane," that is what I do remember. They came from Samye on horseback.

Q

Now I also begin to remember. Didn't we got a lot of silk from the plane [the parachute] and dye them yellow and made vests for the monks?

A

No, that was later. Those things were used in World War II. It didn't come from the plane in Samye. These things came in very large amounts to Tibet. That was later when the war was over. It was only then when everything was over that these things came to Tibet. That was called silk thread from planes (Tib. nambdrü sishen [gnam gru'i si shan]). That came in large quantities to Tibet. We used it a lot. We even wove cloth out of it. Sometimes we dyed it and made chupas from it. Sometimes we got different color dyes and then we made a [chupa](#) out of it. I do remember that I wore them. I had one of those [chupa](#). This is what was left from the things of World War II.

Q

It was about that year that the [dzongpön](#) of Lhundrup Dzong was killed. He happened to be Drunyichemmo Ngagpala's [Tib. sngags pa lags] relative. There was a lot of talk and a lot of trouble. I am sure you remember. Can you say something about this?

A

I heard that he was related to Drunyichemmo Bumtang and he got killed.

Q

Who killed him?

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A

I swear by the Three jewels that I don't know who killed him.

Q

[laughter] Oh! You are swearing by the Three Jewels. This caused great trouble, right?

A

Yes. A lot of people from Sera were arrested and exiled to various places. For instance, Rebe Gyawu was sent to the Hor Bachen [Tib. hor sbra chen] area. I myself was also in Hor Bachen.

Q

Did you meet him there?

A

Yes, yes. I saw him. When they were sent from Lhasa into exile, I was in Lhasa. They whipped them, put them on an ox and made them wear a white [chupa](#) which had black sleeves.

Q

Did you say a white [chupa](#) with black sleeves? Is that different with what we called the white [chupa](#)?

Q

Yes, I think it was because some of the white [chupa](#) had black sleeves. As far as their boots were concerned, they were wearing normal monk's boots. They were sent everywhere. Some of them were sent to the Chamdo side. Some of them were handed over to different aristocratic families in Lhasa. I vaguely remember that there was even one monk in [Ragashag](#) later. As far as Rebe Gyawu was concerned, he went to Hor Bachen and he passed through [Drigung](#). In [Drigung](#), there was one estate of [Sera Jey](#) and that estate helped him with what he needed. I even saw a piece of flesh or skin that he had cut off from his buttock after he was lashed. He said that he had to cut these off after he was lashed. It seemed that he was lashed quite severely. He even showed me those pieces of

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flesh in Hor Bachen. He kept them in a cotton [bag](#). We became quite close friends in Hor Bachen.

Q

Was he [Sera Jey](#)'s [chandzö](#)?

A

He was not only [Sera Jey](#)'s [chandzö](#), but I think he was the governor of Dam (Tib. Dam Jigyab ['dam spyi khyab]). When we were together in Bachen, he told me that he was appointed as the new [Damji](#), but he couldn't get his new audience for getting appointed [Tib. gsar mjal]. That is what he told me.

Q

What else did he tell you in Bachen?

A

He told me that the Investigation Committee had told him to come several times and finally he was arrested.

Q

Didn't he tell you that the verdict they issued was unfair?

A

Yes, he said that. What he told me was, first, that the government showed the attitude that they were not going to harm them and they were going to gradually and peacefully settle it. When that impression was given they went down to explain the situation to them and then, at that time, they were arrested. That is what he told me.

Q

Were they put in [Sharchenjog](#) prison in the Potala?

A

I don't know where they were put. [Sharchenjog](#) or [Shöl](#), whatever it was, they were arrested. For the Investigation Committee, there were several [drungtsi](#). The person who

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mistreated them most was [Kapshöba](#). That was as far as Rebe Gyawu was concerned. That is what he told me.

Q

Why [Kapshöba](#)?

A

Because before they were sent into exile, when they read the edict that should be sent to the [dzong](#) where they were going, [Kapshöba](#) took the edict sent for Rebe Gyawu and he corrected something. At that time, Rebe Gyawu was wondering what kind of correction [Kapshöba](#) made. By the time he (it) reached Bachen Dzong, the [dzongpön](#) had also read that edict. At that time he learned that [Kapshöba](#) had added one word, "root of the poison" [Tib. dug rtsa bong nag]. In other words, this meant he was the main cause of all the trouble. That is what [Kapshöba](#) added.

Q

They really lashed him very heavily?

A

They lashed him very heavily. He could not ride horses at all and had to cut off the pieces of flesh. What happened was that after they lashed him, his wound started to heal and there was some kind of hard cover outside [scab], but the wound inside hurt and when it was squeezed he got a lot of pain, so he had no alternative but to cut them off. He collected all these cuttings and kept them a cotton cloth sack.

Q

How long did it take to go from Lhasa to Hor Bachen?

A

If you went on horseback, it would take about 6 or 7 days. He got corvée horses and 3 or 4 [Trapchi](#) soldiers went with him. When they were sent from Lhasa they were sent on an oxen, but after a little while they got corvée horses from each transportation station.

Q



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When they were sent like that, what sort of articles were they allowed to carry?

A

They had nothing. But as far as he was concerned, he had a good home, in other words, he had good people to look after him. Their [shagtsang](#) sent people throughout the road to provide food, etc. Even after he came to Bachen, they would come every year to bring the necessary things to him.

Q

How was he staying in Bachen Dzong. What was his condition there?

A

In Bachen Dzong he had shackles on his legs and a wooden cangue around his neck. They had a small room for him, but it was not really down in the basement. He was kept in that small room. During the [Horji](#)'s period, these were rooms used by the officers who were working under the [Horji](#). Later when the [Horji](#) position was disbanded, his quarters were left alone. He [Rebe] was put in one of the rooms that were used for [Horji](#)'s staff. Later, when there was no [Horji](#), these were all divided under different [dzong](#).

Q

Was he shackled and wearing the cangue all the time?

A

Yes.

Q

Is that true? I heard that sometimes they removed the shackles and removed the cangue at night? Isn't that true?

A

That is a secret. It was really confidential, but they quietly did that. At night, when they went to sleep, they might quietly take it off, but during the daytime, whoever came, whenever, whether from inside or outside, when they looked at it, it should be always there. Not only that, even when they went to the toilet, the shackle should be there and

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make its sound, "slick-a-slick". If talk [of removing the shackle and cangue] were heard in Central Tibet, then of course the [dzong](#) would be in trouble. That is why they had to remove it surreptitiously.

Q

According to the verdict, they had to wear the cangue during their entire life, right?

A

Yes.

Q

What I heard is that one of the men was handed over to Tsarong and Tsarong [Sawangchemmo](#) used to call him in and share tea, etc. with him. When he would put on his cangue, Tsarong would say, "Oh! Come on forget about it," and he would remove it. That is what I heard.

A

Even at Hor Bachen when they removed it, they could remove it. As far as I am concerned, I don't remember exactly whether it was the Dalai Lama who took the power or if there were rules that every year one prisoner got set free for the sake of one shape's life, or maybe for the sake of one shape to have longevity. Or on the 15th of the 4th month which was the birthday, enlightenment day and the death anniversary of the Buddha, so they would free one prisoner. Anyway, he got freed later. Probably it was the time when the Dalai Lama took the power. I think at that time he was freed when all the prisoners were released. When he was returning from Bachen Dzong, he got corvée horses and servants and he came back through [Drigung](#).

Q

When you saw him a number of times in Bachen, did you always see him with shackles on his legs as well as the cangue around his neck?

A

Yes, I did. Around that cangue, he had wrapped a piece of yellow cotton cloth and made it like a [bag](#) so that he could make it tight with a string and he could also loosen it. When I

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asked him why he did that, he =said, "Well my beard gets caught in between it and that is uncomfortable. That is why I put this cloth on it." In reality, I think he had removed the iron lining on the cangue, so it became loose inside. Therefore, he wrapped it with the cotton cloth on the outside just to keep it together.

Q

What did he do during all this time when he was locked up? He couldn't do business, right?

A

He could do anything. He used to do a lot of business.

Q

How could he do business because he couldn't go out?

A

He had his [dobdo](#) servant there. The servant that he had brought with him. The servant had come from [Sera Jey](#) and the servant would go around. He had one servant who went around to serve him and he also did a little business. He only had the name of prisoner and his shackles: otherwise he was quite comfortable there and did no work. Since he was quite well-to-do, there was no problem. No financial problem. He was quite okay.

Q

What was [Kapshöba](#) at that time? Probably a tsipön, right?

A

You are right. [Kapshöba](#) got the tsipön position after [Lungshar](#).

Q

After he accused [Lungshar](#) of conspiracy, [Trimön](#) of course promised to give him [Kapshöba](#) the tsipön position, right?

A

Yes, yes. That has to be true, [Kapshöba](#) must have been tsipön.

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Q

[Note: Interviewer related quite a number of stories in a unclear low voice about the [Lungshar](#) incident.]

Q

In the same year, they sent a delegation to congratulate the allies' military victory in WW II (Tib. Yügye Tashi Gelek [g.yul rgyal bkra shis bde legs]). What do you have to say about this?

A

I have heard about that also. It was at the time when India became independent, and we sent people to congratulate them.

Q

Did you hear that people went there to congratulate India's independence?

A

Yes, I heard that they went to congratulate India's independence.

Q

What did you hear in Lhasa. Did you know what people went for and where they went? Did they say they went to congratulate India's independence?

A

We heard it was Yügye Tashi Gelek. We didn't know who they congratulated and where they went.

Q

Actually, this was to congratulate the military victory after the World War II. But many people were saying that this was to congratulate the Indian Independence. But what about the people in Lhasa, what did they say was the reason they went?

A

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I really don't know. Everybody said, "Some people are going somewhere for a Yügye Tashi Gelek." I don't know who they were going to congratulate and for what. I had no idea. People also didn't talk much. So many of these things happened. For example, during the [Khyungram](#) trouble, I understood there were some kind of dirty documents revealed.

Q

What kinds of documents were revealed?

A

In the beginning, the trouble started from the 39 tribes of Nagshö and [Khyungram](#)'s refusal to come to the investigation committee. I don't really know what it was, but he was supposed to have written something. After he was arrested and his property was confiscated, when they were going through his property all these letters were revealed. Probably, the letters were about Tibetan politics. There was one young clerk of [Khyungram](#) who used to serve when [Khyungram](#) was the [Horji](#). He used to write letters and he used to copy what [Khyungram](#) had drafted. Though he was not among the inner circle, he was also lashed once in Lhasa. Not only that, [Khyungram](#) and [Bönshö](#) were related. [Khyungram](#) was supposed to have shown that letter to [Bönshö](#). At that time people said, "Now [Bönshö](#) will get demoted." Later, what we heard was that [Bönshö](#) had gone and explained to Reting about his being involved. He said, [Khyungram](#) came with a letter but he never looked at it." When [Khyungram](#) explained about the letter, I said, 'You cannot do such a thing like that' and I sent him back. I never looked at what was in it". That is what [Bönshö](#) explained. That is what I heard. This is the reason that I told you that there must be some kind of dirty letters.

[note: Regarding this there is a detailed explanation in the interview with [Sambo](#). ]

Q

Do you know the name of the clerk?

A

No, I don't know it. I only knew him when I was in [Nagchu](#).

Q

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In that year, about this time, somebody shot at Tsipön Lhalu. Nobody knows who shot. Do you remember anything?

A

I don't.

Q

It was later revealed by Khardo Rimpoche that he had sent the person. He voluntarily made a statement in the [tsondu](#) though nobody was asking for that. He said, "I am the one who is responsible for sending somebody to shoot Tsipön Lhalu" etc. Then, a little later, we had the bomb incident at [Gyambumgang](#) [Tib. rgya 'bum sgang] Drunyichemmo's house. Do you remember anything?

A

Not only did I hear about this, but it was mentioned in Reting's punishment proclamation [Tib. [tsatsig](#)] . What I heard was that somebody came with a little box and wanted to give it to [Gyambumgang](#) Drunyichemmo. At that time, he was not home so the person said, "Please keep it here. I will come back tomorrow or the day after." After that, nobody returned and they wondered what it was. When they opened it, it was a bomb. That is what I heard.

Q

This was not to be given to the Drunyichemmo. It was to be given to the Regent, right?

A

It might not have been meant for the Drunyichemmo. I think it was meant to be given to Regent, but through the Drunyichemmo. I don't know any more.

Q

I think this was the same year that Reting had his trouble, I think it [the trouble] was at the time of the Tsogjö Prayer Festival, do you remember?

A

Yes, I was in Lhasa at that time.

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Q

Please explain what you know and what you remember? At that time, they made Reting kind of black [guilty] by saying that Reting wrote letters back and forth and Khardo confessed that he sent people to shoot Lhalu, etc.

A

In the edict that I saw, Reting Rimpoche had written, "Probably there is no need to do this because even when the stupa is turned upside down, the middle portion will remain at the middle" [Tib. mchod rten mgo mjug log kyang bang rim sked par gnas kyi red]. I have seen that, but that was not in Reting Rimpoche's handwriting. Rather it was in the handwriting of the Regent's physician (Tib. lamenba [bla sman pa]) who was in Reting. Things like that they had set up.

Q

Since you were close to Reting and you had visited Reting, did you ever notice any unhappiness in Reting at all?

A

A few years before, maybe one year before the Reting trouble, I visited him and he told me that he was planning to go for a pilgrimage through India. That is what he mentioned to me. He asked me, "Maybe, can you accompany me?" That's what he asked me. Actually, nobody knows what Reting and [Taktra](#) talked about when Reting left the regency and they talked about the three years and Reting coming back. Since people didn't know about their internal talk, of course Reting became kind of black. This was a problem.

Q

Wasn't there talk at the Tsondu meeting that [Taktra](#) should hand over the regency after three years. I heard it was like that. If so why didn't the Tsondu hand over the regency to Reting?

A

Later, when the Tsondu had to take it from [Taktra](#) and hand it over to Reting, they might have had a problem because the officials who were close to Reting had been put down

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and the pro [Taktra](#) officials had risen up and would have their influence everywhere. Otherwise, it was widely said that Reting would take back the power after three years. Actually, the Tsondu should have reported that [Taktra](#) should hand over the regency, but they didn't say that and Reting found it inconvenient to tell [Taktra](#) that he wanted the regency. So he took the name [pretense] of coming for a pilgrimage and to have an audience with the Dalai Lama. When Reting came, he was welcomed and when he left, they just saw him off and said goodbye. That's all.

Q

How did you hear about Reting's misfortune?

A

When I came from the village to Lhasa, it was 2-3-4 days after. I went to Reting to see the [dzasa](#) and the staff and also took some gifts for them. When I reached [Shide](#), I saw the shengo go inside [Shide](#) and I followed them. At that time, the [thabyog](#) and the [geyog](#) were also standing there. I didn't notice much, but I thought that shengo was going there to meet Reting [dzasa](#) or something like that.

Then I returned and went to the Nyungne Lhakhang. Nyungne Lama Rimpoche's servant, Chöndze Kelsang, was there. I asked him, "Where is Rimpoche?" He said, "Rimpoche went to the Labrang." Then I told him, "I wanted to go to the Labrang but the shengo went up there and the shengo may not leave immediately, so I will wait here for a while. If Rimpoche comes down here, I'd like to see Rimpoche." Then I waited and nobody turned up. After a little while, Chöndze Kelsang was also gone. He had told me, "You stay here." And he left. After awhile he didn't return also. I was wondering what was happening, so after a little while I also went out. When I did, I noticed that there were a lot of [Trapchi](#) Regiment soldiers all around. Then I thought, "This looks really strange and I wondered why." It didn't take very long time before they took the [dzasa](#) with them. They took the [dzasa](#) on horseback. Then I realized that it was very bad, but I couldn't meet anybody so I had to return home.

Q

What were the people saying?

A



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Everybody was saying, "Why, why? What is happening? This is so strange, what is happening?" This was the way people talked. That was all. Nobody could do anything, so we just watched. People were wondering, "Why, why, why?" When I think back now, the people of Reting Labrang might probably have sensed something. [I say that because] I went to see Döyöntsang [Tib. 'dod yon tshang]. There were two twin sons of Döyöntsang Karma Trinley [Tib. kar ma 'phrin las]. Their mother was from Dam. The twins were offered to Reting Labrang and they were sent to school with the [dzasa](#). They had been serving as the steward and the person in charge of offerings. There was the person called Gara Chöndze who was related to the twins. At that time, I saw him and his nephew come to Döyöntsang. Their uncle and family were staying in Dam. What he told me was that his father had a stroke in Dam, so he needed to go and visit him. He picked up some food and articles as well as some medicines for stroke and other things. On that day, I was not paying attention at all. The next day, when I saw the Reting incident at [Shide](#) [in Lhasa], I began to wonder where he had gone. Finally when I was listening, the people said that they came to know something about it. These three people, he [Gara Chöndze] and his nephew and another man had left much earlier to inform Reting [at his monastery].

Q

Probably, those people were the ones the soldiers saw. The soldiers said that when they were reaching Reting, some riders were going on the mountain and the soldiers shot and stopped them. Were those the people you mentioned now?

A

Yes. They went to Phöndo Dzong. At that time, the head of Phöndo Dzong happened to be Reting Labrang's Udukpa [Tib. dbu gdugs pa], the person who carries the umbrella when he was the Regent. While they were in Phöndo, the soldiers of the [Trapchi](#) Regiment went ahead. They were following the soldiers, but they couldn't get there [Reting]. By the time when they reached Reting, they saw that the government soldiers were already inside Reting Summer Cottage, so they couldn't do anything and they went from the other side of the river straight away to the east, towards China. They couldn't do anything. Otherwise, Gara Chöndze was very well-known and a very strong man and he had killed many people. On top of that, there was Nyerpala and I think there were about 3-4 people. All of them were very strong and very reliable and capable persons, but they couldn't do anything and they went away. Also the day these people came to put the seal on

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Reting's door in Lhasa, Reting also had another two brothers who were from Phenpo Jangra shar [Tib. lcang ra shar]. One was called Chöndze Tenzin and the other was called Söshönla [Tib. gsol gzhon lags]. Chöndze Tenzin was in Lhasa and he immediately got on horseback and went after the disturbance. These were the people who went, but when they reached Reting, Reting Rimpoche was already taken (caught) etc. and Reting's houses had been sealed. There were seventeen soldiers. These were the people who killed all seventeen soldiers and finally fled to China. When they reached China, it was the time when the communist trouble started in China. They then joined the Chinese Communist soldiers in China and came along with them back to Lhasa.

Q

After they went, where did they go?

A

They went somewhere in China and then joined the People's Liberation Army and came back to Lhasa with them.

Q

It was a very unfortunate incident wasn't it?

A

Yes, as I mentioned above, usually Reting trusted me a lot so when I went there he told me, "I am planning perhaps to go for a pilgrimage through India. Can you accompany me? I said, "Of course, I will do whatever you say." Later, I came to know that Reting was worried that he might be having problems. He said, "If I can go properly and nicely, then I would like to go to India in a nice way." At that time, he even indicated that there was a possibility that he couldn't go in the proper way. He said, "In case we have to leave all of a sudden, since you have been traveling all the time you must know the way. What are the ways to go?" He even asked me that. Not only that, he even went beyond that, saying, "In case you go with me, it may be for some few years that you may not get to meet your friends and relations, especially your family members. Do you think you can leave them and go?" I told him, "If such a thing arises, wherever and whatever you need, I will be happy to go with you." He said, "This year you are going to the north, right? I said yes. Then he said, "Don't go very far away, stay around in case we have to leave all of a

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sudden. I will send you a message and we will have to go." I said, "Yes." Then he asked me how the roads were. I explained to him, "From Reting, if you go from Reting and you go up, you reach [Drigung](#) Sira and Jangrig Deshi [Tib. byang rigs sde bzhi] and Chibum [Tib. che 'bum] Nagshö. Then, if you can go straight, you can go down the Sog Yagla [Tib. sog g.yag la] Pass. On the other side of the pass, you come to the Hor Drokshe [Tib. 'brog she] area. Then Drokpa [Mey](#) [Tib. 'brog pa smad] and [Tö](#) [Tib. stod]. If you go that way, the road is not so difficult. This road I know very well and you can go on them. That is what I told him the year before the trouble. That year I didn't go very far to the north and I also left a message saying, "If anybody comes from Reting Labrang, don't tell them that I am not in. Send me a message immediately." I explained that and I left. Nobody told me anything thereafter. Then I returned after the winter and when I entered Lhasa, I saw this situation. Later I learned that the government put up the proclamation. In those it was written that Reting Rimpoche hinted that since Nesar Tseyang [Tib. gnas gsar tshe dbyangs] or Yangchen [Tib. dbyangs can] his secret wife [Tib. gsang yum) had a baby, it would be quite difficult to go when it was so cold. These sorts of hints I have seen publicly posted in Lhasa. Because of that, people started talking that Reting might not have been a monk, etc.[not been celibate]. They started creating rumors.

Q

What do you know about Nyungne Lama? Where did he come from?

A

I don't know where he came from. I don't know where he was born. He was a short and eloquent person.

Q

What about his personality?

Q

He was very thoughtful and was considered to be a very efficient man. Of course, he was the incarnation of the Nyungne Lama and the Nyungne Lhakhang was attached to the Reting [Shide](#), so that is why he was connected with Reting. There was no other reason.

Q

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How about Khardo?

A

As far as Khardo is concerned, he was short. Khardo was also from [Sera Jey](#) (College), the same as Reting Rimpoche. That must be the reason why he was close to Reting, I don't know any other reasons behind it.

Q

What is your impression about what people were thinking the day after this?

A

People's impressions, as far as I know, everywhere, wherever you went, not only in Lhasa but right from the north to the south, from the land of the nomads down to the villages in the south and of course in Lhasa, every human being that has a mouth across his face would say, [Taktra](#) used his power and destroyed Reting." Probably nobody was saying that it was because Reting was guilty. People were saying, "When Reting was Regent, he was so great and very graciously helped the government. Not only that, during his term we lived comfortably. Accommodations were cheap, and people were happy. Above all, he found such a great, unmistakable reincarnation of the Dalai Lama. All this he had done. After that, people were saying, "Now we will not have happy times." That is what the people said.

Q

Reting Labrang had a great influence especially in Northern Tibet, right?

A

Yes, the people of the villages and the nomads didn't know how to say [Taktra](#), but they said, [Dewashung](#) [Tib. sde pa gzhung], (the Tibetan Government) is such a disgrace. We can not rely on these people, they are so bad." Wherever you went throughout Tibet, there was not a single person who said good things about it. They all criticized it. Not only that, Reting was said to be the subduer of the foreign troops [Tib. mtha' dmag gi kha gnon]. This is what the people said. Reting Rimpoche was also very good at shooting guns and he loved horses.

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Q

He must be very humorous?

A

Oh, extremely, extremely humorous.

Q

I have heard some stories that during the Khuyug Chöpa [Tib. khu byug mchod pa] Festival in Reting, you played a very interesting role, is that true?

A

Yes, yes, it is true. [Laughter]. Reting Khuyug Chöpa was one of the most important religious ceremonies they had at the Reting Monastery at Reting. It was the year after my father's death when I went there to make offerings and that was the time of the Khuyug Chöpa. I was there and I was supposed to be staying 2 or 3 days. Then Reting Rimpoche didn't let me go and he kept keeping me. Sometimes he took me out for target shooting competitions and sometimes for riding trotters, and the rest of the time I spent mostly in Reting's Summer Cottage (Trokhang). The Reting Trokhang was situated below the Reting monastery. It was very elegant and beautiful. It was built later. Earlier there was a little natural garden there with a river flowing through it. It was a peaceful area. Later Reting Rimpoche built the Trokhang there. It was built for an elegant person. When it was first built, it was one story high, but later it was two stories and was very similar to his Trokhang in Lhasa.

Q

In the past, I also heard that one Japanese spy met Reting in that place. At that time, Reting told him to sit on the sofa, but he sat near Rimpoche's cushion. Then the cook came up and told him, "Why did you sit near Rimpoche?" He said, "Rimpoche told me to sit here." The Trokhang was built in that place, right?

A

Yes, it was as same as the Trokhang in [Shide](#) [in Lhasa].

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Q

When you normally went and saw Reting Rimpoche, was it difficult to see him? Did people have to inform him, and did he have to make appointments, etc. Was it difficult?

A

Not at all. Seeing Reting Rimpoche was one of the easiest things you could do. There was no rule for giving a notice of 2-3 days before going to see him. He never used to let the people wait a few days etc., never. When he walked around and saw beggars, he would talk to them and say, "Where did you come from, who are you, what place, what for, how long have you been here?" He would always go and talk to the people. It was very easy to get in touch with him. It was not as it was with the other dignitaries.

And as far as my family was concerned, even during the previous Reting family, they were connected. Naturally I knew him since my childhood. Even when he was in Sera studying, even in that period my father used to take me there and we used to play together in Sera Monastery. Sometimes we used to play even on the roof of his house in Sera Monastery. This was during our childhood. In that period, we grew up together, so I was quite close to him. Whenever I came to Reting, I would go straight away to him. It was not like someone had to inform him, etc. We didn't act like that. We always joked and played together, and we talked about the rumors. This was how I spent most of the time with him. We shared the rumors among ourselves. Whenever he was in Reting, he was always joking with me. He was always in a very good mood. There was a man called Dingkar Nyömpa [Tib. lding dkar smyon pa]. Incidentally: Dingkar Nyönpa was a person who was sort of known to every [kudrak](#). I think he had been to number of places. I have seen his photograph in books that were published in the west. That is something I remember. As for Dingkar Nyömpa, Reting Rimpoche also used to keep him in Reting quite often. Especially when Reting Rimpoche was in retreat he used to keep him as one of the servants who he could send around. One day, I remember Reting Rimpoche was joking with him. Joking in such a way, that one day he announced that Dingkar Nyönpa had been appointed as the governor of Gangshi, the Gangshi Jigyab [Tib. sgang bzhi spyi khyab]. Gangshi was a little village near Reting Monastery and Reting Rimpoche appointed him as a Jigyab of that village.

Reting Rimpoche jokingly appointed him as Gangshi Jigyab and held all the official ceremonies and made him wear the high official's uniform which was similar to the

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uniforms of the government officials. He had all his Labrang's officials give him scarves. He got a uniform of a fourth rank official. It was like a [rimshi](#)'s dress. He also thought that he was becoming somebody important. Reting Rimpoche made the Reting officials go around and give him [khata](#) scarves. At that time, I think it was that time, Reting Rimpoche was on his trip to the north (Tib. Jangpheb [byang phebs]). When I reached Reting, Reting Rimpoche was not in, he was in the north. So I went to the north so I could meet him. At that time, Reting Rimpoche was very angry with me, because I had lost my celibacy and I had disrobed myself. He was very angry. I went and finally met him somewhere near a river.

Reting Rimpoche was on the other side of the river and I had to go by coracle. When I reached there, I could not meet him as I did normally, and I had to wait for a very long time. I was not allowed to enter his place. Finally when I entered, the first thing he asked about was, "How is your mother? Are you tired?" He didn't talk like that normally. He was quite serious at this time. Finally I told him that I could not remain as a monk so I came out here to apologize to you personally. Then he told me, "As far as your father was concerned, he was a very great man. You and your father should have been working for the Reting Labrang. However, your father was quite like you and that was why you had been made a monk in [Drigung](#). Your father is dead for not even one year, so how dare you disrobe [give up being a monk]. This is a disgrace." In this way he scolded me like hell. After some time, he said, "Anyway, under normal circumstances you have to go through another thing but since there are a lot of outsiders here today, you are excused. From now on I have forgiven you." Thereafter it was like normal, I could go and play football, ride horses and do shooting competition, etc. I could enjoy things normally.

Later, when I was talking to his attendant, the sölzim [Tib. gsol gzim] of Reting, he said, "You were very lucky today, because in such a place you have met him and that was so good. If you had met him in the monastery, etc. you would have been lashed at least one hundred times because Rimpoche was saying, "I will teach him a lesson." Only thereafter he would have talked to you. That is what he had decided a long time before. However, today you have been lucky." Then we came together down to Reting and stayed for a few days. One day he asked me to go and ride with him. We went near the river where a tent had been put up. We were riding horses and had a target shooting competition. I was very good and Reting was very fond of me because of the shooting competitions. After that, lunch was served. It was a normal meal of [bag](#). Reting Rimpoche's lunch was served in Reting Rimpoche's own tent along with the [dzasa](#) and Nyungne Lama. We were



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all in the secretariat, the [Nangmagang](#). It was like an another tent. They had [bag](#) first and then raw ground beef. Thereafter I was called in, and when I went in Reting Rimpoche told me, "Sit down for a while." So I sat down. Then he asked me, "Did you have [bag](#)? " I said, "Yes, I had [bag](#). " He gave me one ball of [bag](#) out of his own skin pouch in which the [bag](#) was kneaded and then he told somebody to give me raw beef also. They brought Reting Rimpoche's own bowl and gave it to me. I ate one spoonful and found it was full of chili in amounts I had never, never, never eaten before. It was so terribly full of chili that I said I could not eat it. But he said, "No, no, no, no, no, you are served it to eat, so you have to eat it." I didn't know how I could escape so I had to swallow the whole thing. I swallowed. Such a thing I had never eaten. After swallowing that, I ran to the river and drank a tremendous amount of water. When I went back, sweet Indian tea was served, I drank that and I got sick. Really terribly sick, I even had diarrhea thereafter. I had to take a lot of medicine. I kept on and on with diarrhea, I was very sick, he didn't let me go. After some time our own festival in [Drigung](#) was starting so I had to go, so I took excuse to take leave. I went and took his own blessings. The day I left I was completely better and cured. I also ate a lot of jum [Tib. lcum], it is some kind of plant like a rhubarb; it looked like sugarcane stalks. I ate a lot of that, thereafter I was vomiting. Probably, that was a like food poisoning.

A year after that I went to see him again during the Khuyug Chöpa period and they kept me waiting. Then the next day, when the next day's celebration was due, he said, "Tomorrow you have to dress up and wear good clothes." I told him, "I have no good clothes because I traveled out here, so I have only ordinary clothes, I don't have any other good clothes to wear." Then he told söshönla, etc. and he told me, "Downstairs they will have clothing for you; borrow it from them." Each one of them said, Yes, I have, I have, I have. Finally söshönla gave me one very good fur [chupa](#), Baktsa, with a bird and dragon designed satin. Baktsa was the [chupa](#) with the fur/wool inside. Outside. there was a lining like satin or anything. I was wearing one good baktsa with fur inside and satin outside. On top of that I put one more serge [chupa](#) and boots as well as one cap. While we were going to the roof, before we went to the monastery, there was a ceremony in the Labrang itself in the room where there were images of twenty-one Taras. I attended that ceremony. It was a very similar function as that of the Drungja in Lhasa. Reting Rimpoche himself came and the Labrang ceremony was started. Since I was not a member of the Labrang, it was not for me to attend the [drungja](#). However, I was told to come in, so I came in. When the [drungja](#) ceremony was over, suddenly everybody had to stand very seriously. At that time



Reting Rimpoché signaled to somebody. Probably, they had plotted something. People started looking around and I wondered what was happening. Then all of a sudden they caught me by my hand, held me tight and took off my own clothes and put on the baktsa robe inside out. They also had one cap made from felt which Reting Rimpoché had used to play a joke when Dinkar Nyönpa was appointed as Gangshi Jigyab. On top of the cap, there was a red colored yak tail. It was put on my head. Then they gave me a stick of incense in my hand and forced me to walk through the ceremonial function. Thousands of people were witnessing this and especially a large number, quite a large number, from the Lhasa area. I was forced to go in that costume. Along with me there were other dignitaries of Reting Labrang as well as monastic officials. It was almost like the Mönlam in Lhasa. All the [geyog](#) were there. It was a very dignified function. I was taken like that from the Reting Labrang to the function. There were also a lot of business people from Lhasa who had come to receive blessings as well as to do business. I had to go all the way through them. There was no way I could escape. I had to go. If I excused myself, they would have gotten angry, so I had to go. All spectators were looking around, and they were all laughing at me. I knew many of those people. It is almost like the scapegoat Lugong [Tib. glud sgong] going around. When we reached the Reting Monastery itself, then there was another function. I similarly attended that function in the same dress. Not only that, after some time when the religious people started coming out, first the [geyog](#) came out. At that time Reting Rimpoché told me, "You go down there with the [geyog](#) and push people around." Then I prostrated to him saying, "Please excuse me." I prostrated before him. At that time, the old [dzasa](#) was there and he said, he intervened, and said, "I think that is enough. Please excuse him." Somehow I just managed not to go into the actual show. Otherwise I almost had to go down, in public, to exhibit myself. He was seriously going to send me down, but somehow I managed to escape this. I think he did this to me purposely to make me overcome some kind of disaster.

He would joke like this. That was how Reting Rimpoché played his jokes. These were a few examples. This function lasted for two or three days; maybe two days. And every day they had this function in Reting Labrang itself after which they went to the Reting Monastery and entered into the Assembly Hall. There is a big Tönchen [Tib. ston chen] where a large heap of dried cookies were piled up and the people were allowed to grab it, just like in Lhasa where the government did it. It was very important and auspicious and one of the biggest Reting functions. A lot of other government officials were also

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invited and were attending. This was one of the important functions of Reting. It was called Reting's Khuyug Chöpa.

Q

During the Khuyug Chöpa did Reting attend the ceremony every day?

A

Yes.

Q

Who was in the assembly hall when the ceremony was held?

A

Only the staffs of the Labrang were inside. The people were waiting outside. Also in the year of the sheep, there is a function called Phorong Thangkor [Tib. pha bong thang skor]. That was a big rock on one of the plains on the plateau below the Reting Monastery. It was supposed to be a sacred place. There was supposed to be a door open through that big rock. For that auspicious occasion, they have a function every year of the Sheep and all people were going and circumambulating around the plain.

Q

Did the Regent also go for the circumambulation?

A

It was one of the important sacred places. They had a big, a similar function in the tent. That was probably the palace of Sangwe Dupei Phodrang [Tib. gsang ba'i 'dus pa'i pho brang] and there was small temple built from cement. It was a very similar function. People go would circumambulate a number of times. Reting Rimpoche himself also did this.

Q

What about his prayers?

A

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Every morning he had a prayer session and sometimes in the evening he also performed Drugchuma, which is one kind of ritual. During that period he was not available. Otherwise Reting Rimpoche was very open-minded and he enjoyed life.

Q

What about the time when he was a Regent? What about the government business? After all the Reting talk was over, when everything concerning the evidence was over completely, I am sure you had a chance to meet the Reting Labrang people. Especially the [dzasa](#), etc. Did you ever talk with them and what did they tell you about what had happened?

A

I have never talked because I never met the [dzasa](#) thereafter. However I met the [dzasa](#) dargen [Tib. dar han], that is the old [dzasa](#).